

FINAL FLING!

'Dons' look good for the Italian job

By **STUART EARP: Wycombe Wanderers 0, Wimbledon 1**

THE two top English sides in the Anglo-Italian Tournament, Wycombe Wanderers and Wimbledon, met at Bisham Abbey last night (Monday) for a final fling before the games in Italy next week. And it was the Dons who came out on top by a single goal margin.

For Wycombe, who leave for Italy on Friday, this was ideal preparation for the matches at Pistoiese and Teramo. Wimbledon, a physical and experienced side, gave them just the testing they wanted in more ways than one. The first 15 minutes of this 'friendly' were extremely tough with players crunching into tackles and keeping local referee Bill Cleere busy with his whistle. The Wycombe players, hard done by at times, came out of the game well despite the result.

Wanderers know only too well that they face an extremely difficult time in Italy not only with their opponents but also with the Italian officials. Wimbledon's

rugged tactics will stand the Blues in good stead while the heat also gave them an insight of what conditions will be like on Italian soil.

Several of the guest players for the tour were on show in this game. John Maskell and Ray Eaton were unable to attend but Peter Watson and John Butterfield both gave useful displays. Watson had quite a battle with Dave Donaldson which threatened to get out of hand but thankfully subsided after much needed action from the referee. Butterfield, a highly experienced player, operated both in midfield and up front and was always dangerous. Another guest for the tour, Martin Gilligan, was unable to make much of an impression against an efficient defence and spent long periods out of the game. The two youngsters signed on

by Ted Powell for next season, Gavin Fraser and Glen Swaby, both gave promising performances.

But it must be said that Wimbledon look a good bet for the final on June 20. They are top of the table at the moment on goal difference and with weaker opposition to face than Wycombe, they must stand a great chance of winning the trophy. The only thing that might go against them is their temperament. Italian referees are unlikely to tolerate their physical game and this could upset the team as a whole. On the playing side, however, they have the all round strength to get through.

The main difference between the teams last night was in the forwards. Billy Holmes, Keiron Somers and Roger Connell are all experienced campaigners and I expect them to be among the goals in Italy. In contrast, Wanderers were unable to carve out clear chances and failed to trouble goalkeeper Dickie Guy. It is their weakness up front that could cost the Blues dearly in this competition.

Wimbledon's deciding goal came after 28 minutes. Holmes' corner was headed on by Connell and Dave Bassett nudged the ball wide of Peter Spittle in goal.

An injury to Keith Mead, who went off in the second half, upset the balance of the Wycombe team whose closest effort came from Butterfield after 67 minutes when he drove narrowly past the post.

It was Wimbledon who created the better scoring chances. Holmes' runs from midfield were seldom picked up by the defence while right back Ken Tilley provided a constant threat. Tilley, in fact, looked the best player on view and played a part in the game's best move near the end when he combined with Holmes to set up a chance for John Leslie, who bent a 15 yard drive inches past the left upright.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle, D. Alexander, K. Mead (sub G. Fraser 56 mins), J. Delaney, P. Birdseye, G. Swaby, H. Kennedy, J. Butterfield, M. Gilligan, D. Evans, P. Watson (sub T. Cox 67 mins).
WIMBLEDON: R. Guy, K. Tilley, D. Donaldson, W. Edwards, T. Eames (sub H. Falconer 68 mins), J. Leslie, D. Bassett, S. Rice (sub I. Cooke 45 mins), W. Holmes, K. Somers, R. Connell.

Referee: W. Cleere (High Wycombe).
Half time: 1-0. **Goalscorer,** Wimbledon — Bassett (28).